Exploring Various Treatment Options for Depression

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What Depression Treatment Options Are Available?

As someone diagnosed with depression, it may be challenging to decide where to begin on your treatment journey. There are many different forms of treatment – from natural remedies to pharmaceuticals – but the effectiveness of each entirely depends upon the individual.

What Is Depression?

Depression is much more than just feeling sad or upset. Depression, also known as major depressive disorder, is a mood disorder that causes persistent feelings of sadness and loss of interest.

Depression affects the whole person, from the way you feel to the way that you think and behave. It is all-consuming and can lead to numerous emotional and physical issues.

In order to combat or manage depression, long-term treatment is required. What precisely that treatment consists of varies significantly per person.

Seeking Help for Depression

In order to begin your treatment journey, the first and most important step that you must take is to seek help. If you feel that you are suffering from depression or depressive symptoms, make an appointment with your primary care practitioner or a mental health professional as soon as you can.

If you feel uncomfortable reaching out to a professional, seek out a friend or family member that you trust first.

If at any point during your treatment journey, you feel that you might hurt yourself or someone else, do not hesitate to call 911 or your local emergency line immediately. There will always be people there to help.

Natural Treatments for Depression

For those who are hesitant to take prescription medications or try traditional therapy options, natural treatments may be a good place to start on your journey to wellness. These natural treatment options are suitable for many different people, as they generally support good mental health practices.

Set a Routine

A lack of routine can have negative consequences on many people, not only those who suffer from depression. If your days lack any structure, it is easy to begin to feel lost and confused, making you feel worse.

Your routine can be as straightforward or as complex as you'd like, so long as you find something that works for

you.

Create Personal Goals

Setting goals for yourself can go a long way in helping you to set your daily routine.

These goals do not need to be complex – they can be as simple as having a shower and getting dressed in the morning. Starting small will set you up for success, increasing your chances of adopting it into your daily routine.

Goals can help you create a sense of purpose in your day. As you get better at reaching your goals, you can begin to increase their difficulty gradually.

Get a Good Sleep

Sleep is very important, as a lack of sleep can increase the symptoms of depression.

Going to bed and getting up at the same times every day can be adopted as part of your daily routine. This will also make it easier for you to get the proper amount of sleep every night.

Eat Healthy Foods

Your body needs a variety of vitamins and nutrients to properly function, so you must give your body what it needs to stay healthy.

Depression often affects diet, either causing people to overeat, or not eat enough. Whichever is true for you, regaining control of your dietary intake can assist in the treatment of your depression.

Staying well-hydrated is also part of maintaining a healthy diet. Your body needs water to maintain optimal levels of performance.

Make sure that you are replenishing your body with the water it needs throughout the day and avoid dehydrating drinks, such as coffee and alcohol.

Exercise Your Body

Even a small amount of exercise can go a long way in the treatment of depression. If you find it difficult to become motivated, start by going for a short walk a couple of times per week and take it from there.

Exercise temporarily boosts your endorphins, which make you feel good. Regular exercise has long-term effects for those with depression, as it can encourage the brain to rewire itself in positive ways.

Getting started is the hardest part. Once it becomes routine, exercise is a lot easier to maintain.

These natural treatment options are a great place to begin your treatment journey, as they set you up for further success.

Getting good sleep, eating healthy, staying hydrated, and exercising will keep your body and mind physically healthy. Coupled with other treatment options, this is a great basis from which to work up to mental wellness.

Next page: More depression treatment options, including alternative medicines, medications, therapy and more.

Alternative Medicines

The use of alternative medicine in the treatment of depression is nonconventional and largely unproven, but it is

an option. As always, if you are interested in exploring alternative medicine options for depression, speak to your primary care provider first.

Depression Supplements

There are three common supplements associated with depression treatment:

- St. John's Wort
- SAMe
- Omega-3 Fatty Acids

These are herbal and dietary supplements that are believed to alleviate the symptoms of depression. If you choose to try any of the above, talk to your doctor first, as they can interfere with other medications that you may be taking.

Mind-Body Techniques

Integrative medicine practitioners believe that the mind and the body must be connected or in harmony to maintain your health and well-being. As such, many mind-body techniques are believed to help in the treatment of depression, including:

- Yoga or Tai Chi
- Meditation and Mindfulness
- Music/Art Therapy
- Acupuncture
- Massage Therapy
- Aerobic Exercise
- Spirituality

There is evidence to support that some of these techniques may assist in the alleviation of depression.

Meditation and mindfulness have grown in popularity in recent years, as they can assist in stress management. These techniques teach relaxation and can make it easier to deal with stressful situations.
Best of all, treatments like meditation, mindfulness, yoga, and tai chi are easily accessible to a large number of people. Several books and videos teach the basics, available online, through mobile apps, or in stores.

Generally speaking, many of these alternative treatment options do not work to treat depression on their own, but they may be used in conjunction with other methods to increase their effectiveness.

Medications for Depression

When it comes to effectiveness, medications and psychotherapy have long been regarded as the best ways to treat depression. These medications are not available to the general public and must be prescribed by a primary care physician or a psychiatrist.

Medications for depression can ease many of the emotional and physical symptoms of depression, making depression much easier to deal with daily.

Many different medications have been proven to relieve some or all of the symptoms of depression, but the effectiveness of each entirely depends upon the individual.

With so many to choose from, it can be a struggle to find which form of medication will work best for your case. This is why it is so important to work with your doctor to find what works best for you, no matter how long that process may take.

Antidepressants are organized into groups, based on what they do to treat depression symptoms, as explained below.

Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs)

SSRIs are often regarded as a good starting platform for doctors to begin prescribing medications for depression. These drugs are very common antidepressants, used by many different individuals for the treatment of their depression.

SSRIs are usually considered a safer option when it comes to medication. They do not cause as many side effects as other forms of antidepressants often do. Not only are they a great place to start, but many individuals with depression find lasting relief as a result of taking SSRIs.

Some common SSRIs include:

- Fluoxetine (Prozac or Sarafem)
- Sertraline (Zoloft)
- Citalopram (Celexa)
- Escitalopram (Lexapro or Cipralex)
- Paroxetine (Paxil, Seroxat, or Pexeva)
- Vilazodone (Viibryd)

Serotonin-Norepinephrine Reuptake Inhibitors (SNRIs)

SNRIs are similar to SSRIs, in that they help to increase the levels of serotonin in the brain. Both medications inhibit the absorption (or reuptake) of serotonin, causing an increase in feelings of well-being and happiness.

The difference is that SNRIs not only blocks the reuptake of serotonin but norepinephrine as well. This increase of norepinephrine in the brain leads to alertness and focuses attention, but can also lead to restlessness and anxiety.

Some common SNRIs include:

- Duloxetine (Cymbalta)
- Venlafaxine (Effexor)
- Levomilnacipran (Fetzima)
- Desvenlafaxine (Pristiq or Khedezla)

Next page: More information on medications for depression, and other depression treatments.

Tricyclic Antidepressants

Tricyclic antidepressants have been proven to be quite effective, but often cause severe side effects. For this reason, they are often not prescribed unless you have already tried SSRIs without seeing any improvement.

Tricyclic antidepressants are among the first developed antidepressants and include:

- Imipramine (Tofranil)
- Nortriptyline (Pamelor)
- Amitriptyline (Elavil)
- Doxepin
- Trimipramine (Surmontil)
- Desipramine (Norpramin or Pertofrane)
- Protriptyline (Vivactil)

Monoamine Oxidase Inhibitors (MAOIs)

Like tricyclic antidepressants, MAOIs are often only prescribed when other medications have failed to work, as they can cause serious side effects. They are also among the first antidepressants developed.

Many individuals prescribed MAOIs must also follow a strict diet, as using these medications can have dangerous or deadly interactions with certain foods. Pickles, wine, and cheese tend to be on the list of foods to avoid while taking MAOIs.

MAOIs can also negatively interact with other medications or herbal supplements. You must divulge to your doctor the full list of medications, supplements, and vitamins that you are taking before starting these antidepressants.

MAOIs cannot be combined with SSRIs. Some MAOIs include:

- Tranylcypromine (Parnate)
- Phenelzine (Nardil)
- Isocarboxazid (Marplan)
- Selegiline (Emsam)

Atypical Antidepressants

These medications are called "atypical," not because they are rarely prescribed as antidepressants, but because they do not fit into the other classification groups for antidepressants.

Some atypical antidepressants include:

- Bupropion (Wellbutrin, Aplenzin, Zyban, or Forfivo)
- Vortioxetine (Trintellix or Brintellix)
- Nefazodone (Serzone, Dutonin, or Nefadar)
- Mirtazapine (Remeron)
- Trazodone

Other Medications

Although there are many medication options available for the treatment of depression, everyone presents a unique case that requires personalized treatment. If one medication isn't quite working, your doctor may choose to add another medication to the mix, rather than trying something completely new.

These other medications are taken with antidepressants to enhance their effects.

Such additions can include other antidepressants, mood stabilizers, or antipsychotics. In some cases, anti-anxiety medications or stimulants may be added for a short period of time.

Using Medication to Treat Depression

It is important to keep in mind that although many individuals take medication as part of their treatment, every case is unique. What works for one may not work for another.

Finding the correct medication and dosage to treat your depression can be a long and frustrating process, but ultimately, it may help you cope with your symptoms. You may need to try several different types of medications or even a combination of medications before finding something that works.

Most antidepressants and other medications used in the treatment of depression take weeks or even months to take full effect, and also for the side effects to ease as your body responds to the treatment.

Using medication to treat depression takes patience, but when the correct medications are finally discovered, they can make a world of difference to those suffering.

Many who find relief of their symptoms through medication begin to believe that they've been cured and can, therefore, stop taking the medications prescribed. This can be dangerous, as stopping treatment abruptly or missing several doses often leads to withdrawal symptoms, which include the worsening of depression.

Always work directly with your doctor to adjust the dosages or switch your medications. Using medications for depression treatment is an ongoing process, not a quick fix.

Next page: Other depression treatment options, including therapy and alternative therapy, and the treatment journey.

Talk Therapy for Depression

Psychotherapy – or talk therapy – is a common treatment option for many mental health concerns, including depression. Many individuals use therapy in the treatment of their depression, either in conjunction with medication or without.

Many forms of therapy have been proven to assist in the treatment of depression. Cognitive-behavioral therapy and interpersonal therapy are just two more common options, but many others exist.

Whether or not it is paired with medication, psychotherapy can aid in the treatment of depression by teaching the following:

- Identifying negative beliefs and behaviors, then replacing them with healthy, positive ones
- Developing positive interactions with other people
- Setting realistic goals for yourself
- Adjusting to a crisis or other difficulties
- Finding coping methods and problem-solving techniques
- Regaining control over your life and your symptoms

Talk therapy can be offered on a one-on-one basis, between a therapist and a patient, or may also be provided in a group format. Group therapy is often a more affordable option, as individual therapy sessions are often costly, depending on the level of insurance coverage you have.

Group therapy also offers the additional benefit of allowing you to connect with other people who may be going through a similar experience as you. Group therapy sessions are often run by hospitals, faith groups, or local mental health clinics/programs.

If you are interested in what individual and group therapy options are available in your area, your primary care provider will be able to point you in the right direction.

Alternative Therapy Options

For those who may not have access or the resources necessary to explore talk therapy, there are other therapy options available that may be of interest. Therapy is also available through computer programs, online sessions, websites, or mobile apps, as well as textbooks or workbooks.

These alternative therapy options are very accessible to a wide range of individuals and can be used in conjunction with traditional talk therapy, or on their own. Your doctor or therapist may be able to suggest books or programs to you, to ensure that the form of therapy offered will be beneficial to you.

Brain Stimulation Treatments

For those who have explored many of the options available to those with depression, but have not found success, brain stimulation therapies may be the solution.

Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT)

This therapy option involves the passing of electrical currents through the brain, which impacts the function and effect of neurotransmitters, thus relieving depression.

ECT is generally reserved for those who have not found success with medications or cannot take antidepressants for health reasons, or those who are at a high risk of hurting themselves or someone else.

Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS)

This treatment involves a coil being placed against the scalp, which sends brief magnetic pulses to stimulate the nerve cells within the brain that are involved in mood regulation.

TMS is also another option for those who have not responded to antidepressants.

The Treatment Journey

For most individuals, the treatment of depression is a long and winding journey, with its own ups and downs. Remember this and try to be gentle with yourself as you explore the various options that are available to you.

Keep your primary care provider informed on what you have tried and the results of that attempt. Even treatments that fail offer clues into what works and what doesn't when it comes to your personal experience with depression.

Unfortunately, there are no quick fixes when it comes to the treatment of depression, but do not give up!

Many people struggle for years with therapies or treatments that do not work for them, only to find something that works when they least expect it.

You deserve to feel good about yourself and the world around you. You will find a treatment option that allows you to cope with your depression in a healthy way, so long as you remain open to that possibility.

The treatment of your depression can also change over time. Something that has worked for you in the past may suddenly stop being as effective, and that is okay.

This is why treatment is a journey that we all must take, but it is a journey worth taking. We all deserve to live free of the burden of depression and to find a treatment that allows us not only to cope but to thrive.